

**Suffolk University Sawyer Business School
Class of 2023 Commencement
Sunday, May 21, 2023
Leader Bank Pavilion
Commencement Undergraduate Speaker
Amanda Echevarria, BSBA '23**

Good morning. I'm Amanda Echevarria. I am honored to be here with you all on this joyous and beautiful day to celebrate the resilient Class of 2023. I would like to extend gratitude the board of trustees, President Marisa Kelly, Dean Zeng, along with the phenomenal faculty, staff, and administration for bringing us to this moment. I surely cannot forget to thank the crowd of family, friends, mentors, and loved ones who have supported us

[00:30] throughout this journey and have come to celebrate with us in this significant life moment, especially my family, who have supported me throughout this journey and is currently very surprised as I had, they had no idea that I would be speaking today. [LAUGHTER] Our time at Suffolk was marked by change, persistence, and a fire within ourselves that has brought us here together. While we all come from different backgrounds, different experiences, and have walked different paths, Suffolk has brought us together for the past four years.

[01:00] As part of those four years, like the rest of you, I've experienced an amount of growth and realization that I did not think was possible. It has been a metamorphosis that took becoming a Bruins fan, and going overseas to Suffolk Madrid, where I returned with five pieces of luggage and five best friends. With that, I would love to share two lessons that have changed me and how I lived my life. I also have to point out that many of you in this crowd have helped me to learn these lessons.

[01:30] So thank you for that. My first lesson, lean into fear. Four years ago, my life changed. And interestingly enough, it was not solely because I moved over a thousand miles away to a new state where I knew no one and had no friends. It was because the moment I paid my deposit to Suffolk, I decided I would lean into fear. In my case, I was afraid to leave everything I knew I in Miami behind and move to an unfamiliar place. However, I knew I needed some change.

[02:00] And boy, did I experience change my freshman year. For example, I suddenly had to share a room with three other girls. I had to eat Sodexo food. [LAUGHTER] I was now in charge of everything for myself, and I'm only going to mention it once, the unfortunate COVID-19 pandemic that cut freshman year short and sent us all home. Leaning into fear always begins with nervousness and worry, and I must be realistic when I say that the next couple of years will encompass a lot of that. However,

[02:30] that should not deter or stop us. It should push us. Accept it as it comes, learn from it, grow from it, pivot, and onto the next change. When our freshman year was cut short, it was

undoubtedly a fear-filled time. However, we were forced to come face to face with these fears and worries, and once we could return and be together, our time and new memories became far more fulfilling, memorable, and sweeter than we could have imagined. This leads to my second lesson.

[03:00] Allow change to happen *for* you, not *to* you. While change is at times uncontrollable, it does not mean that it is always a bad thing that will always negatively impact us. Change is uncomfortable. However, owning it and modifying our view on it is when one takes control. Change happens *to* you when you allow it to control your choices, and when it stops you. Change happens *for* you when you accept it, own it, and use it for growth, even when it is uncomfortable. The next year of our lives will be marked by a

[03:30] lot of change and a lot of firsts. However, you are not alone in this journey. Being the first is not a bad thing, and is a change you should accept with open arms. As a first-generation college student, like many of you, I can say that being the first makes you a trailblazer, and I will be frank with you. It also entails making mistakes. However, being a trailblazer in your own right entails learning from those mistakes, growing from them, and more importantly, using it to help others. There's a Spanish saying

[04:00] that my abuela, mom, and tias have raised me on. It goes, "*Dime con quien tu andas y te leo quien tu eres.*" In English it translates to, "Tell me who you surround yourself with, and I will tell you who you are." Well, for the past four years, I have been surrounded by some of the most brilliant minds, the kindest hearts, the most embracing community, and most certainly the most resilient cohort of individuals who I firmly believe are going to bring about immense change to this world.

[04:30] This stands true not only for my peers, but also the faculty at Suffolk. With that alone, I am golden, and I think abuela would say we're all doing pretty good. *Estamos bien.* Class of 2023, congratulations on this fantastic achievement. You're here because you leaned into fear, and allowed change to happen *for* you. I would say you've been practicing these two lessons for a while now. Thank you, and I wish each and every one of you all the very best. Keep leaning into fear and make change yours. [APPLAUSE]